

**WHAT IS CLAIMED:**

1. A business method for signaling quality of content of data provided from a source to a receiver of the data content, the data having at least one record, the at least one record having at least one data field, the business method comprising the following steps:

- 5        assessing the content of the data using criteria corresponding to a business;  
       assigning a grade as a function of the criteria, the grade indicative of the quality of the content of the data; and,  
       linking the grade to the content of the data;  
       wherein the receiver dynamically accesses the grade to determine subsequent use of the data without having to access the data.

2. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the step of linking further comprises associating a portion of a file name to the grade.

3. The business method as recited in claim 2 wherein the filename corresponds to a file containing the data.

4. The business method as recited in claim 1 further comprising associating a grade file with the grade.

5. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the quality corresponds to a particular data field of the at least one data field.

6. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the quality corresponds to a particular record of the at least one record.

5 7. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein a particular quality corresponds to a particular record of the at least one record.

8. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein a particular quality corresponds to a particular field of the at least one particular field.

9. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the criteria for determining the quality is a predefined function.

10. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the criteria for determining the quality uses access to a database.

11. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the criteria for determining the quality is an externally defined function.

20 12. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the criteria for determining the quality uses access to an independent database.

13. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the grade is numeric.
14. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the grade is a color.
- 5 15. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the grade is a Boolean.
16. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the business is sales.
- 10 17. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the grade corresponds to merchandise quality.
18. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the data corresponds to direct marketing data.
- 15 19. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the data corresponds to mailing addresses.
20. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the step of linking further comprises associating the grade to a data set.
- 20 21. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the criteria for determining the quality is customized by the business.

22. The business method as recited in claim 1 further comprising assigning a rating as a function of the grade.

5 23. The business method as recited in claim 1 wherein the data corresponds to documentation.

24. The business method as recited in claim 23 wherein the grade corresponds to the version of the documentation.

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